IGNACIO AMEZCUA
DIRECTOR
PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

When Ignacio Amezcua talks about health, he speaks with the same discipline and clarity he brings to his role as director of the Hidalgo County Purchasing Department. But beyond contracts, bids, and internal processes, he has built a reputation across the county for something equally important: cultivating a culture of wellness — not by mandate, but by example.

Amezcua's commitment to health did not begin recently. It traces back to his early years and to habits formed long before he entered county government.

"I started at the age of 10, up until I finished college," he says of his martial arts training. A brown belt in judo, Amezcua credits the sport with instilling lifelong discipline. "Believe it or not, more than anything else, besides allowing you to do self-defense, it allows you to control yourself more than anything else."

That discipline shows in how he structures his days.

"When I finished college and my first internship, I went to a Japanese company called Panasonic," he recalls. There, each morning began the same way. "We started at 7 a.m. every day, and we have 15 minutes to stretch. Everybody. All the way to the CEO. All the plant managers, everybody. Fifteen minutes every single day."

The experience left a lasting impression. "A stretch in the morning is fundamental to having a good day," he says.

Today, he carries that mindset into county government.

"A stretch in the morning is fundamental to having a good day."

"I do believe that exercising at least 30 minutes a day helps or makes a big difference in a person," Amezcua says. He encourages staff to use their allotted breaks to move. "You are so overwhelmed, or you are so stressed, go walk around the building. Or watch a video for stretching."

In a department of more than 20 employees across four divisions, Amezcua weaves health into weekly operations.

"I have a healthy minute with my managers," he says. Each Friday, he shares a topic — from health to dental care — and asks managers to pass a message along. "I try to share a different health topic every Friday."

His approach is steady rather than forceful. "I don't push them. I encourage

my staff to participate," he says.

That encouragement has translated into results. The Purchasing Department has thrice claimed the county's wellness challenge champion belt — a friendly competition among departments. "I'm very proud of my staff," Amezcua smiled.

Personally, he participates in every step challenge. "Last year, I did all the step challenges at the 6,000 step tier. This year, my goal is 8,000," he says.

For Amezcua, wellness is not theoretical. It is personal.

"If you live in the past, you live in depression. And if you live in the future, you live in anxiety.

"I come from a family with high blood pressure. Unfortunately, my dad died at 66, a massive heart attack," he said. "My aunt, his sister, died at 48, the same thing. A massive heart attack."

Because of that history, he says, "I have to be careful."

Over the last six years, he has adopted intermittent fasting as part of his routine. "It's working for me," he said. He gradually increased from 12 to 16 hours daily and occasionally longer on weekends.

He also redefined how he exercises. After completing a 5K in 30 minutes, he reassessed. "You are stressing your lungs. You're stressing your heart. You're stressing your kidneys. You're stressing all your body," he explained. Now, he prefers walking. "I think it's the best thing to do right now."

His philosophy centers on sustainability. "I don't want to do anything that's going to stress my body," he said.

Despite receiving dozens of calls and emails daily, Amezcua keeps perspective.

"At the end of the day, we should be very grateful because we have a great employer — Hidalgo County," he said.

He extends that gratitude to family life. "Don't do it for you. Do it for them," he tells employees with young children. He encourages staff to attend their children's games and events, even if it means leaving work early. "Those moments are so special," he says.

His own parents modeled that presence. "They were always there," he says of attending his tournaments and games.

As a father, he carried that forward. His daughter, musically inclined from an early age, recently completed her degree at 20 and is pursuing law school. "We are very proud of her."

He believes each phase of life deserves attention. "Every phase of your life, you need to enjoy it. When you're a kid, when you're a teenager, when you're a young adult, and so on," he expressed.

Wellness, for Amezcua, extends beyond physical. This year, he set three personal goals.

"I want to try to do an audiobook every week," he said. He listens for about 90 minutes daily, sharing insights with staff. One book

resonated deeply. “If you live in the past, you live in depression. And if you live in the future, you live in anxiety,” he says.

He also plans to return to piano after more than two decades and to improve his singing. “It’s never too late for that,” he smiled.

Lastly, he wants to learn to sing. “I’m not a good singer, but I like it,” he laughs. “I want to try.”

Ultimately, his message to employees is consistent.

“Life is too short, and we need to enjoy it,” Amezcua says.

In his department, wellness is not a slogan on a poster. It is a daily practice — reinforced in Friday meetings, in step counts logged, in walks around the building, and in a director who models what he asks of others.

“I will continue to encourage,” Amezcua pledged.

For him, encouragement is leadership — and health is part of the job.